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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
24 May 1955

TO: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT: French senatorial elections of 19 June 1955

1. Offices to be filled: 159 of the 320 seats in the Council of the Republic, the upper house of parliament. One half of the council is renewed every three years, and this year senators will be elected in the departments running alphabetically from Ain to Mayenne.

The senators are elected indirectly by departmental electoral colleges composed of the National Assembly deputies from the respective department, the departmental councilors, and delegates elected by the municipal councils. The strengths of the electoral colleges vary from 319 to 1,797. The average is 1,000 electors, with representatives of the municipal councils holding more than 90 percent of the seats in the electoral colleges. The majority vote system with two ballots is used in the departments returning less than four senators. Proportional representation is used in the rest of metropolitan France. Thirty-six of the seats at stake on 19 June are to be filled by overseas representatives, who are chosen by a variety of systems, all different from that used in France itself.

2. Parties or factions participating: All of the national parties represented in the National Assembly and Council of the Republic (see Section 4 below).

3. Outstanding personalities: The council has regained some of the prestige of the pre-World War II Senate, and for the first time since the war, assembly deputies are candidates for seats in the upper house. The six-year tenure of office and the disengagement from the active political arena are particularly appealing.

Many leading senators are up for re-election, including the president and all four vice presidents of the council, the presidents of 14 of the council's 20 committees, and the presidents of most of the political groups. Among the

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prominent senators seeking re-election are: Independent Party leader Roger Duchet; Education Minister Jean Berthoin; Marcel Plaisant, chairman of the council's Foreign Affairs Committee; Michel Debré, president of the Social Republicans, and former ministers André Cornu and Charles Brune.

4. Present party strengths:

Party	Seats in pres- ent council	Seats up for renewal	Percentage votes	
			1948*	1952**
Communists	16	3	6.7	13.1
Socialists	58	39	19.2	18
Other Leftists	-	-	1.0	0.8
Popular Republicans	26	11	5.1	9.8
Overseas Independents	14	2		
Rally of the Republican Left (Radical Socialists & Democratic Resistance Union)	71	36	23.3	16.0
Gaullist Bloc				
Social Republicans	47	18	20.2	15.6
Republican & Social Action	6	5		
Rightist Bloc				
Peasants	19	10	22.2	25.7
Independents	60	33		
Miscellaneous	-	-	2.3	
Unaffiliated	3	2		
	320	159	100	99.0

5. Principal issues: Few of the most heavily populated and industrialized departments will elect their senators this year. The elections will be concentrated in the center and south of France. The church-school issue will be important to the Radical Socialists as well as to the Socialists, two thirds of whose present seats will be at stake. Only one third of the Gaullists' seats are up for renewal, and therefore the breakup of De Gaulle's Rally of the French People in the April cantonal elections will not be fully reflected in the senatorial vote.

\* Election of whole Council of the Republic.

\*\* Half of Council renewed.

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Except for the Communists, who have only one fifth of their seats up for renewal, the rest of the major parties have about half of their seats in question.

The senatorial elections are not a reliable index of public sentiment because of the indirect method of election and the disproportionately large rural representation on the electoral colleges.

6. Principal factors influencing outcome: The elections are indirect and the alliances between the parties on the local level are of great importance, particularly where run-offs are necessary. Little change is expected in the present conservative orientation of the council.

In 1948, the majority-vote procedure eliminated the Communists in 79 departments. The Communists are expected to retain at least two of their three seats at stake since they were won in areas where proportional representation is used.

The conservative tradition can also be expected to militate against any significant increase in left-of-center representation.

Less than 5 percent of the electoral colleges will be Communist and, judging from past experience, the Communists could theoretically determine the selection of a senator in only a few isolated cases. In 1948 there were only six instances in which the outcome might have been changed if the Communists had made a deal to throw their vote to a non-Communist candidate.

7. Background: Even though only one third of the Gaullists' seats are up for renewal, the breakup of the Rally of the French People evident in the cantonal elections will be somewhat reflected in the senatorial elections. Most of the former Gaullist votes have gone to the center and right parties.

Despite the Socialist Party leadership's vigorous rebuffs of Communist approaches for joint action, there was some Communist-Socialist co-operation on a local level in the cantonal elections and there may be some in the senatorial elections.

8. Informed opinion on outcome: American officials in Paris expect the present conservative alignment to continue following the 19 June elections.

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9. Significance for US security interests: Continuation of the present conservative alignment will be an additional factor favoring Faure's right-center coalition.

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